

Vermont Early Learning Standards

Instructor's Guide

June 2005

Acknowledgements

Many talented individuals contributed their time, wisdom and experience to the Vermont Early Learning Standards Instructor's Guide. They are listed below, along with the VELS domain they contributed to:

Approaches to Learning: Shawn DuBois, Christina Manna, Jim Squires, and Janice Stockman

Social and Emotional Development: Shawn DuBois; Laura Lawson Tucker, Dorothea Marsden, Maureen Young-McCarthy, and Janice Stockman

Language, Literacy and Communication: Meg Baker, Shawn DuBois, Laura Lawson Tucker, Adam Rosen, Jim Squires, Janice Stockman, and Cathy White

Mathematics: Shawn DuBois, Karen Hewitt, Loree Silvis, Jim Squires, Charlotte Stetson, and Janice Stockman

Science: Sally Anderson, Shawn DuBois, Janice Stockman and Meredith Wade

Social Studies: Sally Anderson, Shawn DuBois, Charlotte Stetson, and Janice Stockman

Creative Expression: Bonnie Dasher-Andersen, Jude Bond, Shawn DuBois, Jim Squires, Bonnie Stearns, and Janice Stockman

Physical Development and Health: Shawn DuBois, Leslie Kelly, Jim Squires, Dianne Starr, Janice Stockman, and Nancy Sugarman

Special thanks go to Sally Anderson, Vermont Center for the Book, and Grace Greene, Vermont Department of Education, for the annotated children's bibliography of books that provoke meaningful conversations about the content of the VELS domains. Because of Sally's commitment to using literature to teach about educational content, children's book sets are available to supplement this instructor's guide in delivering VELS domain training. Book sets are located at your region's child care resource and referral agency, and may be borrowed for use in VELS training.

We are grateful to Bonnie Dasher-Andersen for her technical writing, editing and design of the final document. We couldn't have done this without her.

This Instructor's Guide was funded through a Head Start State Collaboration Office Supplemental Grant from the Head Start Bureau, and support from the A.D. Henderson Foundation.

Introduction

Deepening Professionals' Understanding of the Vermont Early Learning Standards: An Instructor's Guide

This is an exciting period in early childhood education. The public is increasingly aware that the early years are learning years that leave lasting impressions. Parents and the public look to professionals in the field of early care and education to support the development and learning of preschool children, making certain that every day children leave an early childhood program, they are better off for having been there.

The Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) are part of the fabric that supports early care and education in Vermont. They provide consistent, developmentally appropriate expectations to guide curricula throughout the state—in child care centers, public school programs, Head Start, family child care, and in children's own homes. Vermont is fortunate to have knowledgeable and experienced professionals such as you involved in bringing this information to the field.

Once professionals in the field were introduced to VELS, they sought additional information in the various domain areas: *Approaches to Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Language, Literacy and Communication; Mathematics; Science; Social Studies; Creative Expression; and Physical Development and Health*. We recognized that simply handing out the standards or providing a fleeting introduction would have little value and minimal effect. To ensure greater knowledge and skill among professionals, experts in the field of early childhood development and learning gathered to prepare an Instructor's Guide examining each of the eight domains in depth. This guide is designed to help instructors deliver workshops of varying length by providing background information on each domain, interactive learning activities, and professional resources.

It is not expected that a single instructor will be sufficiently knowledgeable in all of the domains to feel confident instructing in each module. We encourage you to present the modules in which you have expertise and experience, and to present together with instructors who complement your own expertise.

This guide is intended to help deliver consistent messages to the field about how children develop and learn as well as roles adults play in supporting this growth. The guide, divided by domain, is not designed as a step-by-step curriculum. We recognize that as instructors, you already have a wealth of information and training experiences to bring to this the material. We encourage you to feel comfortable integrating your own resources into these training modules.

How the Instructor's Guide is Organized

Each module is intended to provide approximately six hours of training. They may be presented in a full-day session, two three-hour sessions, or any combination you can think of that is reasonable and will achieve the objectives.

The standard format for each domain is as follows:

Materials Needed: A list of materials the instructor should gather in order to complete the module. Copies of the VELS are always needed; participants should be encouraged to bring their own, but instructors will want to have a few extra on hand just in case.

Goals and Objectives: Goals of the module aligned with the core knowledge areas of Northern Lights.

Introductions and Opening Activity: A menu of options to get participants engaged in the material.

Review the Standard and Domain: A brief review of the VELS domain, learning goals and examples.

The Development of [Domain]: An overview of key points instructors may wish to use in a mini-lecture on the topic.

What Does [Domain] Look Like?: Activities designed to help participants know how to observe and interpret children's behaviors and learning in each domain.

Reflecting on [Domain]: Opportunities for participants to reflect on their own teaching practice related to that domain.

The Adult Role in Supporting This Domain: How adults support children to develop in each domain.

The Role of the Environment in Supporting This Domain: How materials, the physical environment and structure of the day supports children in developing in each domain.

Reflecting on the Adult Role and the Environment: Another opportunity for participants to reflect on their own teaching practice, this time honing in on the adults' roles and the environment.

Putting It All Together: Engaging learning opportunities for participants to synthesize and apply their learning.

Conclusion: Instructor's opportunity to summarize key points with participants.

Handouts and instructions on how to present engaging activities follow each outline. Relevant articles and information that will help the instructor plan the session are also included. Professional resources are cited at the end of each section.

We recommend instructors use videotapes of children to demonstrate some key principles in each domain. A list of videos is provided with a description and information on how to order them. Since most high quality videos are costly, you may wish to share and borrow from each other or from a lending library in your community. Sometimes the best videos are ones that are produced by teachers and parents for the purpose of documenting their own children's learning. These are invaluable to instructors and we encourage you to use them.

An annotated children's bibliography is also provided. Children's literature is one of the best learning materials for the content areas in the VELS. Children's books can also be great sources of instruction for adults who wish to learn

about curriculum and standards. For that reason, book sets are available to supplement the activities in the instructor's outline. Feel free to use books to illustrate the key points in each of the domains.

You may wish to add your own material, as well as your own or your organization's evaluation and documentation of professional development forms. Please consider adding material that is in keeping with the approach and philosophy of this instructor's guide.

Knowledge changes over time. As new research allows us to learn more and think differently, this guide will become an evolving resource rather than a static guide or curriculum. Please feel free to adopt or adapt the materials while remaining true to the spirit that is represented in the Vermont Early Learning Standards. We think you will find these materials useful as you help others to expand their horizons, deepen their understanding and enhance their skills.

Effective staff development is an art. Simply providing a person with this guide will not guarantee a presenter's confidence or effectiveness. For this reason, we encourage you to organize, plan, and conduct training sessions in teams. The participants will appreciate differing perspectives and experiences and it will make your job easier. Also, realize that the participants have a great deal to offer as the information is presented. Capitalize on their knowledge and experience. And last, but not least, have FUN!

Shawn Dubois

Jim Squires

Janice Stockman

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